



# GILA NEWSLETTER

21ST EDITION

October 19, 2002

## FROM THE COMMANDER

### A Successful Reunion

Time has come for 9E families to start thinking about the reality of a successful reunion. We have been fortunate to experience tremendous success thus far in Kosovo, and I am sure things will not change. I am amazed at how fast time seems to pass, partly because we stay busy and our love ones are doing so well at home station. In fact, I am proud of the great job our spouses have done running the house and juggling all the glass balls while we are away. We have experienced few problems during this rotation from families, but few in number and I thank the great 9E spouses for a job well done. As we prepare to return to Schweinfurt I turn my attention to a **successful reunion** of soldiers with families, friends and love ones.

The Army takes reunions very seriously and has expended a tremendous amount of effort researching methods to bring love ones back together. Often after action reviews are sought out and used to determine some of the best ways other units conducted reunion programs. We have been busy borrowing all the lessons learned to ensure a successful reunion of the 9E family. Over the past two months we began our push to communicate our message of a **successful reunion**. Briefings to soldiers and family members were conducted in Kosovo and Schweinfurt. Soldiers have been screened for signs of possible reintegration counseling needs and concerns. Additionally, every member of 9E has been counseled or talked to by Chaplain Blount spreading the gospel that we intend to have a great and **successful reunion**.

It is going to take all our efforts to make the goal of a **successful reunion** a reality. I am positive we will be successful and achieve the desired outcome. My objective is a smooth reunion without disrupting the great things spouses have done at home. My very first initiative is to ensure soldiers have predictable work hours. Soldiers in 9E will work until 1700 daily. Saturdays and Sundays are off days. I am convinced that if we follow the reunion tips we learned we will minimize marital strife and reestablish relationships with children with little or no problems. The community is hosting a marriage seminar on 4 and 5 December 2002, which is geared toward helping couples strengthen relationships. **As an incentive, couples that take advantage of the program will get a special bonus and the military spouse will get the next day off from work. Hooah!!!**

As the holiday season draws near I ask each of us to think about the single soldiers. Single soldiers are unique and present concerns for me. As we settle into our routines with our families, single soldiers are quite often left to themselves. Many new soldiers have joined the 9E team and deployed promptly after arriving in Schweinfurt. They will return to a community consumed with taking care of families and the single soldier may begin to feel left out. Help me take care of our single soldiers. Invite them over for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, spread holiday cheer with baked goods, etc. One way the Battalion is helping single soldiers is to build a strong, proactive BOSS program that will get soldiers out of the barracks and involved in enriching activities in Germany and throughout Europe. I urge soldiers to get involved and once again to go easy on partying. The objective is to have no alcohol related incidents this year. If we can achieve success in this area we will achieve tremendous results, save lives and reap huge benefits in the long run.

I am certain the great families and soldiers of 9E will achieve a **successful reunion**. Fort Bragg is an example of a catastrophic ending to a great mission where soldiers were on point for the Nation. I urge everyone to use the tools that were given to us from the Chaplain and utilize other agencies (ACS, Red Cross, FRG) if needed. Thanks again.

**"FIRST TO CROSS"**

LTC Idlet

### IN THIS ISSUE:

|                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| HHC/9E.....              | page 2 |
| CSM's Corner.....        | page 2 |
| A/9E.....                | page 3 |
| B/9E.....                | page 4 |
| C/9E.....                | page 5 |
| A/94E.....               | page 6 |
| 737TH EOD.....           | page 7 |
| Chaplain's Corner.....   | page 7 |
| Scenes from KFOR 4A..... | page 8 |





## HHC/9E: Headhunters

The headhunter ship is being packed and loaded. We can feel the wind picking up as we raise our sails and prepare to shove off for Schweinfurt. Redeployment day is just around the corner, and we're frantically meeting all the last minute requirements, classes, and paperwork deadlines that abound. The end is squarely in sight! And yet when we return, we'll need some time to adjust again – to you, our loved ones, to our jobs, and to our alcohol tolerance.

The company is working hard to minimize the stress everyone undoubtedly feel upon our return and ensure a smooth reunion with our loved ones. Our leaders are taking proactive steps to identify soldiers who may need assistance with the reintegration process, and we're leading them in the right direction. On Saturday, we all received an outstanding reintegration briefing from our very own Chaplain James Blount. He focused us on the realities of reunions and we learned not to be too aggressive in reclaiming some of the daily jobs you've assumed since we left. With that said, we are now trained to sit back and watch you continue to do a fine job managing the bills, finances, checkbooks, children, and even the household chores, just like you have for the past six months!

Our mindset on return is cautious one. Your husbands, wives, girlfriends, boyfriends, and acquaintances have been alcohol free for six months (with perhaps one brief respite while in Bulgaria) and aren't going to be quite up to what they were when they left. When we return, the whole company is begging you to help us ease back into the routine. Slowly get back into the groove of things, because all the alcohol in Schweinfurt isn't going anywhere and that last thing we want after a spectacularly successful deployment is to deal with the loss of a family member during off-duty hours in Germany.

To mitigate these risks, we've established a definite recovery plan that involves (in the absence of an exception granted by Lieutenant Colonel Nathaniel Idlet) a strict routine that ends promptly by 1700 each day. Block leave has been assured and reassured all the way up the chain of command and will not be adversely affected by the current international tensions.

Last but not least were this weeks events, which included Staff Sergeant Carroll, who went to Camp Monteith for eight days to attend the Total Army Combatives Trainer program. He received his certification and can now train the rest of the Headhunters and Gilas in Army Combatives. He came back with bruises and cuts, but in full spirits after a full week of rocking, rolling, punching, and ducking. We continue to track ranges and fitness tests, so that our statistics will be good through the new year and beyond.

We're looking forward to seeing you soon. Until the ship sails in,

**Headhunters!!!**



*Staff Sergeant Eric Carroll demonstrates hand to hand over at Camp Monteith*



## CSM's CORNER

As we wind down our mission here and prepare to redeploy I want to share a few thoughts. The soldiers of Task Force 9<sup>th</sup> Engineers have done a super job here in Kosovo and are looking forward to going back to Central Region and reunite with our families, friends, and loved ones. As we enjoy our time with friend and families I want everyone to think safety, especially headed into the holidays. Safety should be a consideration in everything we do. We owe it to family, friends, and loved ones to make safe and informed decisions in whatever activity we participate in and when traveling in country and back home to CONUS. The soldiers and families have done too much to make this a very successful deployment and we need active involvement from everyone to ensure the safety of our soldiers, families, and friends.

In addition to the reunion with our families, friends, and loved ones we have to maintain readiness. The battalion will be conducting recovery operations from this deployment and getting ready for the holiday season. Readiness is not just taking care of equipment and military personnel; it is taking care of our family and loved ones. As we start block leave and we all go our separate ways to take a well-earned rest we have to be prepared to carry out any mission the Army calls upon us to execute. As leaders we owe it to the soldiers and their families.

***"First to Cross!"***

CSM Rather



TASK FORCE 9TH ENGINEER (C)



## A/9E: Breach Hell!

As the activities here in Kosovo wind down, the soldiers of Alpha Company are beginning to focus on a successful reintegration of life back in Germany. When our sappers return, we expect single and married soldiers alike to have a successful reunion with loved ones and the community that has done so much for us over the past six months. For the single soldiers PFC James Martin, A Co's primary BOSS representative, will keep them abreast of any and all activities – encouraging them to go out and have some fun. Married soldiers and spouses are asked to clear their calendar on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of December to attend couples reunion activities. This isn't going to be some boring briefing (I am sure everyone is aware of the tragedies experienced at Ft. Bragg not so long ago) but an event geared to help couples rediscover one another. It will also be a good time for some of our newer Apache families to meet other families in the battalion.

Once we return to Schweinfurt, there will still be quite a bit to get finished before Thanksgiving holiday (and max-leave shortly after that)! Normally, "quite a bit of work" means late nights for the soldiers, however, one more thing that married and single soldiers will agree on is the commander's decision to end each workday at 1700. No, that wasn't a typo – 1700 is the latest we will all get off of work each night! Speaking of work, here is what the platoons have been up to the past week:



*1<sup>st</sup> Platoon readies themselves for their breach training with TF1-18IN*



*SPC Clark finds himself in a bit of a mess at during MICLIC training at Range Falcon 4*

This week, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon got a break from the monotony of guard when they conducted maneuver training with Bravo Company, TF 1-18<sup>th</sup> INF. On 13-15 OCT 02, they linked up with the company at Range Falcon 4 for a deliberate breach. 2LT Dunker, SFC Agmata, and 1<sup>st</sup> Squad provided the engineer mobility support for Bravo Company. They did an outstanding job at the breach and the company team commander was extremely appreciative of their hard work. The rest of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon soldiers have continued their force protection duties. After this force protection cycle, they will be mission platoon one last cycle before heading back to central region.

The sappers of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon are in the midst of yet another week of Camp Bondsteel force protection. SGT Walker, SPC Clark, SPC McElroy, SPC Devere and PFC Wood spent the weekend attached to 1st Platoon for the combined arms breach training. SPC Clark excelled while maneuvering with M1 Tanks and M2 Bradleys and successfully opened a lane in a minefield using a MICLIC towed behind his ACE. On the 15th, 1LT Thompson and 2LT Kutsko greatly enjoyed accompanying a Special Forces team on a truly motivational training exercise.

With another week in the bag, we move a week closer to completing the mission here in Kosovo. Upon our return, the activities for all soldiers and families to participate in will be both diverse and great, however, some dangers to us remain in Schweinfurt. Alcohol related incidents and domestic disputes continue to plague units immediately after deployments. We all need to do our part, as both a team and a military family, to ensure the safety and welfare of OUR family. Everyone must keep in mind that maintaining vigilance to the possible dangers is the best way to reverse this dangerous trend. As we begin refocusing our effort to transition operations, please continue thinking of your favorite sapper, as he continues to Breach Hell for the final month here in the Balkans!





## **B/9E: Outlaws**

Dear Outlaw Families,

The days are ticking away and our reunion with you is right around the corner. Last night, I went to the movie theater and picked up a reunion pamphlet, probably the same one that is all over the place back there. There was actually quite a bit of good information in the book, and that will be the theme of this newsletter. Today, 6 soldiers received coins from the Brigade Command Sergeant Major. Last week, soldiers received awards for participating in Sports Day, and before that soldiers received awards for their actions in sector. Where am I going? The soldiers have been through a lot, and have received quite a bit of recognition. Some have received more recognition and others less. Some feel that they deserve more, and others just have quite a bit to brag about. Still where does this lead? I know that every time that I come back from a deployment, I want to talk about all my success and let downs. I want Melissa to know everything that I went through, and to explain my great adventures. She remains excited for about an hour, and then nicely pawns me off on someone else to talk to, and that person does the same. We all have quite a bit to talk about, and want to tell you everything. What we always forget is that you have also been through quite a bit, and received no awards. Your reward was that short period of time after the kids went to sleep, and you had a moment to yourself. You had to do twice the amount of work, and most of it probably was not stuff that you would like to talk about. You probably just want some peace and quiet. On the other hand, you may have had a job promotion, or the children may have started a new school year. You may have a new hobby or new friends. You may have changed religion. The bottom line is that we have all changed. No one remains the same even after 6 months, and if we all realize that, then the reunion will go much better. We all have to ask ourselves: In what area have I changed that will be of the biggest impact on my spouse or significant other?

The soldiers are being asked this and many other questions now. Once again, it is easy for the soldiers because there are many sergeants around to assist them. Look for the FRG for help if you find that you have a list of changes in your life that you feel will make a drastic impact on you spouse or significant other. The best time to ask for advice is now. The word surprise is usually not good, when you first greet each other. These are the changes that I would ask you to look at: Did you change your religious status? Did you change your drinking status? Is there a new male in your life (even if he is just a friend)? Did anything of importance to my spouse break or get damaged? Was there a major change in my looks? Did any family traditions radically change? Are our finances in bad shape? Is there something that my husband used to do that I will no longer tolerate? I imagine that there are many others, but this list is a good start. Think about the questions, and then think about how much of an impact that the answers will have on a successful reunion. If your conclusion is that, "This is going to be a problem" Call the chaplain, an member of the FRG, or a good friend and talk through it with them. If they agree with your conclusion then contact make sure that the issue is brought to the 1SG or I through the FRG, the rear detachment NCOIC SSG Meyers, or through the Chaplain. We want to have a successful reunion, but to do so, we have to ask ourselves the hard questions.

God Bless,  
CPT Bill Lash







## C/9E: Dawgs of War

Hello to all family members and friends of Charlie Company. This is my first newsletter since taking command of Charlie Company and I would like to take the opportunity to say thanks for the support you are giving to your loved ones here in Kosovo. The morale of this company continues to remain strong and we look forward to seeing you all soon. We continue to remain busy here as we complete border closure obstacles, continue training, and begin preparing both our soldiers and equipment for re-deployment.

We began this week with a little bit of fun as C Company held its second organizational day. We were able to muster the entire company to the soccer field for a BBQ and football games. Through rain and wind, the sappers of C Company tested their grit against the other platoons and in the end, the "Mad Dawgs" of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon came out on top. Congratulations to them and thanks to 1LT West and SSG Villainueva (PL and PSG of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon) for the unbiased (yeah right) refereeing.

On Monday, A&O platoon ran an excellent M249 SAW range and completed the qualification of the rest of TF 9<sup>th</sup> Engineer's SAW gunners. On Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and A&O completed two borders closure obstacles.



*Dawgs of War at the football game*



*2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon marking the suspected minefield*

These obstacles were unique because it was first HESCO Bastion obstacle we emplaced as part of the mission to deny illegal vehicular traffic from crossing the FYROM border into Kosovo. Throughout this week, 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon continued to remain vigilant as the QRF platoon and was called up to mark the edge of a possible minefield. They completed this without incident.

During the next two weeks, Charlie Company will be pulling Camp Bondsteel force protection for the last time. The next three weeks will also be important to both soldiers and their families, as we will be giving seminars and classes with emphasis on re-union and reintegration. The company leadership is currently counseling soldiers on programs, opportunities, and classes available to them. These counseling sessions are intended to provide them help on marital, financial, and other problems they might experience as we return to Germany. These counseling sessions will be the foundation for a successful re-integration and I encourage everyone to remain patient and to continue to communicate with their loved ones.

We will continue to stay in touch with all of you and look forward to returning.

CPT Hackenberg





## A/94E: Warriors

This past week saw many great achievements for the Warriors. Two soldiers, SGT Street and PFC Sanchez, reenlisted after deciding to further commit themselves to the military. PFC Casallo was promoted after proving that hard work and dedication does in fact pay off as his Army Physical Fitness Test score attests. The Warriors also said goodbye to SPC Gulseth this week. An extremely skilled heavy and light equipment operator, SPC Gulseth left Kosovo to move back to the United States. He received the Kosovo Campaign Medal and the NATO Medal for his performance here in Kosovo. These soldiers led the way in receiving accolades from the Task Force 9<sup>th</sup> Engineer leadership and continue to prove to others that the Warriors lead the way.

Although the construction missions have decreased in numbers, the Warriors find themselves with the daunting, yet achievable, mission of turning in equipment. This is the last mission to achieve before redeployment and one that all Warrior soldiers are readily and anxiously participating in. The mechanics are engaged with technical inspections and troubleshooting, while the constructors continue to inventory and prepare their vast array of tools for turn in. Because of the motivation, dedication, and knowledge that redeployment is near, there is no doubt that this mission will be successful.

With the thoughts of redeployment and reintegration, the soldiers underwent reunion training with the Task Force 9<sup>th</sup> Engineer Chaplain this week as well. The Warrior leadership, along with the Task Force leadership, is committed to ensuring successful reunions occur for the outstanding Warrior soldiers. The past six months have witnessed the Warriors do great things in Kosovo and, with your continued support, the leadership, at all levels, anticipates even greater accomplishments once the Warriors return, are reunited with their families and loved ones, and are reintegrated into the Wolverine family.



*SPC Young and SGT Clack load tool kits onto the back of the HMMWV for turn in*



*CH Blount reenlists SGT Street in the Army*



*CPT Ridenour promotes PFC Casallo*







## 737th EOD

The unit continues to maintain a high operational tempo. This week's focus was incident response, demolition operations and inventories. The unit conducted its final demolition operation. The unit destroyed over 424 pounds of captured ammunition. Aftershock continues to clean and prepare equipment for shipment back to the United States. Unit has also been tasked to provide mine awareness to personnel who will monitor Kosovo elections later this month. This action will ensure that no problems with mines or improvised explosive devices are encountered.

We are less than three weeks from the day we come home to friends and family. As this day draws closer, a subject that must be on a lot of families' minds is reunion. This can be a very touchy subject if not handled properly. There are particularly some topics that are being discussed in detail here in Kosovo. Those subjects are marital reunion, reintegration with children, friends and alcohol. The unit has received a reunion brief and has an idea of what to expect as far as changes when they get home to friends and family. I have also sent the same brief to the rear detachment so families in the rear can be informed too. Remember CH (MAJ) Foxworth is always available for counseling if you feel you need it.

The operational tempo remains steady. We anticipate an increase right before and during our transfer of mission to 702<sup>nd</sup> EOD. Morale continues to remain high and safety continues to be our number 1 concern to ensure everyone gets home to family and friends. CPT Green



*Last  
demolition  
operation on  
EOD Hill*



## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

### Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The same way you met the standards in Kosovo is the way you need to meet the standards in Garrison and at home. In this issue, I will be talking about drug and alcohol abuse prevention. Let me make it crystal clear that there is zero tolerance for drug and alcohol abuse. That comes from our Task Force Commander, LTC Idlet. When it comes to alcohol, then everything should be in moderation. Drugs, on the other hand, are not acceptable at all. What scares all of us is the thought of someone drunk, or high on drugs, flying down the highway, like a missile off course, headed towards someone's family. In the end everyone in both vehicles are dead because of stupidity and carelessness. The stupidity and carelessness of the drunk behind the wheel and those who let him or her drive. What a waste of life! Don't let that be you. Another awful situation that can develop from drug and alcohol abuse is domestic violence. All too often someone, who is trying to drink their problems away, will cause hell by beating their wife and kids. They will do awful things, when they are drunk or high, that they would never ever do in their right mind. That is because drugs and alcohol lower your inhibitions. You are much less restrained. Actually what this all comes down to is integrity. Webster defines integrity as, "uprightness of character; honesty; the condition, quality, or state of being complete or undivided." If you are upright in character, honest, and complete, then you will not need drugs and alcohol to make you feel better. If this article does not apply to you, then share it with someone who really needs to hear it. (And we all know someone who really needs to hear this) My next article will focus entirely on Domestic Violence Prevention. I leave you with these words from Thomas Paine, political philosopher and author: "Character is much easier kept than recovered." May God richly bless you and your family!!!

JAMES W. BLOUNT  
Chaplain (CPT) USA



TASK FORCE 9TH ENGINEER (C)

## Scenes from KFOR 4A



*SPC Gulseth, A/94E, receives his Kosovo medals from MAJ Mirage, the TF 9E XO*



*1LT Thompson strikes a pose with his M4 during Tuesday's training*



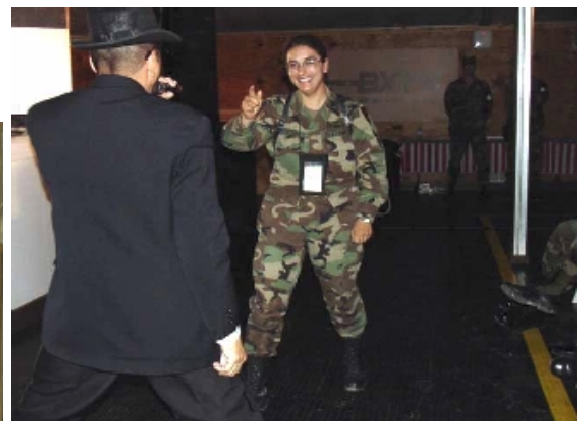
*SPC Tosch and 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Charlie Company, filling HESCO Bastions on FYROM border*



*1LT Ralan Hill, HHC XO, lends a helping hand to the crew of "Tops and Blues" after the performance*



*Staff Sergeant Eric Carroll (upper right) demonstrates his new skills on a poor, unassuming classmate*



*MAJ Steele, the TF 9E S3, gets into the act with a serenader. The theatrical performance was presented by "Tops and Blues" a traveling group of entertainers made up of Air Force personnel*

Editor in Chief  
The Gila Adjutant

TASK FORCE 9TH ENGINEER (C)

